

Supervisor John Gioia's Weekly eUpdate

April 10, 2010

Join Me in Celebrating "Week of the Young Child"

Many people may not realize that our County's Community Services Bureau is the largest preschool provider in Contra Costa County. Our County's child development centers provide free or reduced fee early childhood education services to more than 2,500 families countywide. In West County, 1,214 children are served at nine County child development centers and eight childcare partner sites.

The County's centers provide more than just childcare. They are comprehensive "learning centers" that offer enriching educational activities, nutritious meals, creative play, mental health services -- and extended care for busy families.

The County does this by combining federal Head Start, state and local funding into one program. Low income families are given priority to help "even the playing field," giving these kids the same benefits of early learning as children in private preschools.

I regularly visit our County child development centers and have had parents tell me how they would not be able to work if their children did not have access to quality, affordable childcare.

Even in today's challenging economy, the County's preschool services are growing, thanks to aggressively seeking and securing additional state and federal grants. The County received almost \$1 million in federal stimulus dollars which is being used for child abuse prevention training, parent support groups, and language classes.

Some exciting West County initiatives include:

- A program to support fathers as caregivers
- A school readiness initiative which helps children who did not attend preschool to be ready for the transition to Kindergarten
- A grant from the Bay Area Discovery Museum for students and their families to visit the Sausalito museum for free
- Free dental screenings for more than 200 children
- A partnership with the West Contra Costa School District to provide extended care at Nystrom, Lincoln, and Downer elementary schools.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children has designated April 11 – 17 as the 'Week of the Young Child,' which will be recognized next Tuesday, April 13 by the Board of Supervisors. I will be visiting some of our West County centers next week and talk to parents to hear their experiences. If you're interested in knowing about other events or childcare opportunities, please email us at dist1@bos.cccounty.us.

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